

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

The listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (Currently Amended) A filter element for manufacturing tobacco smoke filters comprising:

a filtering material which substantially contains starch and/or a starch-based polymer mixture and comprises pores and/or filter channels being open in the direction of the gas flow, the pores and/or filter channels having a diameter in a range of about 50 μ m to about 100 μ m,

~~characterized in that wherein~~ the filtering material is arranged in alternatingly succeeding layers ~~consisting~~ comprised of starch and/or a starch-based polymer mixture and activated carbon (21) and the layers are stacked transversely with respect to the direction of the gas flow.

2. (Currently Amended) The filter element according to claim 1, the filtering material comprising ~~preferably~~ continuous filter channels extending substantially in the direction of the gas flow, wherein the diameter of the filter channels preferably lies in the range of 50 μ m to 100 μ m.

3. (Currently Amended) The filter element according to claim 1, wherein the starch and/or the starch-based polymer mixture form(s) a base material for the activated carbon (21).

4. (Currently Amended) The filter element according to claim 1, wherein the ~~filtering material consisting of~~ starch and/or [[a]] starch-based polymer mixture is a foamed material (20) or a fibrous material.

5. (Currently Amended) The filter element according to claim 4, wherein the activated carbon is an activated-carbon powder, wherein the foamed material (20) or the fibrous material forms a base material for the [[an]] activated-carbon powder (21).

6. (Currently Amended) The filter element according to claim 1, the filtering material further comprising ~~containing~~ natural fibers ~~such as~~ selected from the group consisting of cellulose fibers, hemp, [[or]] and cotton fibers ~~preferably~~ in an amount of about 5 percent by volume.

7. (Currently Amended) A method for manufacturing a filter element according to claim 1 comprising the steps of :

- (a) continuously supplying a metered mixture of starch and/or a starch-based polymer mixture as well as further additives into an extruder system, [[.]]
- (b) heating and kneading the mixture at a defined temperature and pressure regime for forming a melt,
- (c) extruding the melt through a nozzle,
- (d) forming an extruded product having an air-permeable configuration
- (e) compressing the extruded product and forming a filtering material as an endless filter (7),
- (f) separating the extruded filtering material into portions, and
- (g) forming a filter element ~~(1)~~ comprised of at least one filtering material portion.

8. (Currently Amended) A method for manufacturing a filter element according to claim 1 comprising the steps of:

- (a) continuously supplying a metered mixture of starch and/or a starch-based polymer mixture as well as further additives into an extruder system,
- (b) heating and kneading the mixture at a defined temperature and pressure regime for forming a melt,
- (c) ~~Extruding~~ extruding the melt through a nozzle,
- (d) ~~Forming~~ forming an extruded product having an air-permeable configuration,
- (e) ~~Compressing~~ compressing the extruded product and forming a filtering material as an endless filter (7),
- (f) ~~Separating~~ separating the extruded filtering material into portions, and
- (g) ~~Forming~~ forming a filter element ~~(1)~~ consisting of two or more filtering material portions and each comprising an activated carbon layer ~~later (21)~~ between subsequent filtering material portions.

9. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 7, wherein the filter channels are introduced into the filtering material portions before forming the filter element ~~(1)~~.

10 (Original) The method according to claim 9, wherein the filter channels are formed by water jets, needles or a laser beam.

11. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 7, wherein the filtering material is formed of starch foam, a biopolymeric film ~~films~~ or a starch polymer film ~~films~~.

12. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 7, wherein the further additives are selected from the group consisting of polyvinyl alcohol, polyester amide and/or polyester urethane, polyactic acid (PLB), poly hydroxyl butyric acid (PHB), a flowing assistant, ~~as well as optionally~~ and a foaming agent.

13. (New) A filter element for manufacturing tobacco smoke filters comprising:

a filtering material which substantially contains starch and/or a starch-based polymer mixture and includes a plurality of pores and/or filter channels aligned partly transversely relative to the direction of gas flow through the filtering material,

wherein the filtering material is arranged in alternately succeeding layers comprised of starch and/or a starch-based polymer mixture and activated carbon and the layers are stacked transversely with respect to the direction of gas flow.

14. (New) The filter element according to claim 13, further comprises pores and/or filter channels that are generally aligned in the direction of gas flow through the filtering material.

15. (New) The filter element according to claim 13, wherein the pores and/or filter channels extend all the way through the filtering material.

16. (New) The filter element according to claim 13, wherein the pores and/or filter channels have a diameter in a range of about 50 μm to about 100 μm .

17. (New) A filter element for manufacturing tobacco smoke filters comprising:
a filtering material which contains substantially starch and/or a starch-based polymer mixture and at least about 5% by volume of natural cellulose fibers, and which includes a plurality of pores and/or filter channels extending at least partially through the filtering material,
wherein the filtering material is arranged in alternately succeeding layers comprised of starch and/or a starch-based polymer mixture and activated carbon and the layers are stacked transversely with respect to the direction of gas flow.
18. (New) The filter element according to claim 17, wherein the pores and/or filter channels are generally aligned in the direction of gas flow through the filtering material.
19. (New) The filter element according to claim 17, wherein the pores and/or filter channels have a diameter in a range of about 50 μm to about 100 μm .
20. (New) The filter element according to claim 17, wherein the natural cellulose fibers comprises at least one of cotton or hemp fibers.